

ARGYNNIS AND SPEYERIA

BY WILLIAM HOVANITZ

Department of Zoology, Los Angeles State College

The use of names for nomenclatorial purposes involves judgment on two levels. The first level involves nomenclatorial laws, and the second is the judgement on the part of the taxonomist as to the most reasonable and useful application of a name for a biological category.

When a name is being considered for use on the generic level, the first point is its nomenclatorial availability. Here, it is important that the name not be a homonym, and that it have priority according to the established laws of nomenclature. A species is designated as the *type species* of that genus. For example, the species *paphia* L. has been designated as the type species of the genus *Argynnis*.

Once the type species has been established for a genus, and there are no doubts of the nomenclatorial status of either, the specific name or the generic name, no one who wishes to remain within established criteria for nomenclatorial uniformity and fairness has any right to change this name. The generic name is strictly applied, however, only to the one species. It is the prerogative of any individual to use the same generic name for other species if he deems that the species concerned ought to be considered congeneric. Strictly speaking, it is possible for each species in existence to be the type species for a different generic name. If each of these names were used, each species would be in a different genus and the beneficial effects of binomial nomenclature would be rendered worthless.

The purpose of a binomial nomenclature is to indicate relationships by grouping related species into the same genus. How this should be done is the prerogative of the individual taxonomist. It is assumed that such a person will use the method that is best suited to his purposes in showing relationships.

The genus *Argynnis* in the broad sense is composed of many species, some of which can be grouped into categories having biological similarities, but which are smaller in content than the genus when considered with a broad view. Generic names have been used for some of these smaller categories with various species designated as types. It is perfectly satisfactory from a nomenclatorial as well as a biological standpoint to do this. This is the situation with regard to the use of *Speyeria*. The type species of the name as a genus is *idalia*.

For those persons who wish to consider *idalia* as not congeneric with *paphia*, or with any other older name, *Speyeria* is a valid generic name. Or, it can be used in a subgeneric sense, in which case *Argynnis* would again be used as the generic name.

This author believes that the broad use of the genus *Argynnis* is preferable to the practice of restricting the name to the *paphia* group of species, and further believes that the genus can be divided into some more or less satisfactory subgenera of which *Speyeria* is one. Our American species then would be designated *Argynnis* (*Speyeria*) *idalia* to show its relationship. The other American Argynnids then would also continue to use the name *Argynnis* rather than *Speyeria*.

It is not the purpose of the editor of this journal to insist on any particular terminology for to do so would impinge on the freedom of the scientific worker, who alone has the right to make his choice. This editor can only insist on sound data to back the decisions of authors in their use of terminology, as in drawing conclusions from their work.